



Dry mouth

Dry mouth is an abnormal dryness of the mucus membranes in the mouth. This happens when there isn't enough saliva or the composition of the saliva changes. Dry mouth is common in the elderly.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Sticky and dry, parched feeling in the mouth
- Lack of saliva
- Problems with talking and/or swallowing
- Lessened taste
- Bad breath
- Burning sensation in the mouth
- Dry mouth is worse after sleeping

CAUSES, RISK FACTORS & CARE

Dry mouth can be due to a side effect of many medications. These include antidepressants, antihistamines, water pills, and medicines for high blood pressure.

Dry mouth can also result from many health conditions. These include nasal congestion, gum disease, diabetes, stroke, and Sjögren's syndrome, an autoimmune disorder. It may also be a side effect of chemotherapy or radiation therapy used to treat cancer.

Treatment is aimed at relief and/or treating the underlying cause. If not treated, dry mouth may lead to severe tooth decay, infection, and poor nutrition.



SELF-CARE

- Try an over-the-counter artificial saliva.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Have regular dental checkups.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water each day. Avoid drinks with sugar.
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free hard candies.
- Keep lips moist with lip balm.
- Breathe through your nose, not your mouth.
- Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol.
- Read about the side effects of medicines.
- Avoid salty, spicy, or acidic foods.
- Don't use tobacco products.
- Use a humidifier in the bedroom.

CONTACT DOCTOR WHEN:

- You have any of these problems with dry mouth:
 - Dry, burning eyes
 - Chewing or swallowing problems
 - Sore throat
 - Signs of an infection, such as fever and/or redness, or pus in the mouth
- Dry mouth is a chronic problem or there are marked changes on the tongue.